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Week one: Fall Mission Feeding, last week

Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh

Anne Graham Lotz

Sheila: Hi! Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Sheila Walsh here with Randy Robison. I'm real excited about today's guest. When you see someone who has been used by the Lord mightily over the years and you just know that they have kind of an idea of what God is doing among his people but this guest we have today, I'm really blown away by her honesty and vulnerability, and the way that she has let us into her own journey in prayer.

The book is called *The Light of His Presence*. It is such a joy to welcome Anne Graham Lotz to the program. Thank you so much for being with us.

Anne: Sheila, thank you. I always enjoy talking with you and with Randy. So thank you for having me.

Sheila: One of the things that I admire because I know when Paul wrote to the Thessalonians he said, "We determined among you not only to share the gospel but our very lives," and you have begun this book that way. You've begun with your own struggles in prayer and that might surprise some people.

Anne: I think if we're all honest, Sheila, any believer would say that we've struggled in prayer from time to time. I seem to consistently struggle in prayer. But the consistency of struggle is in three areas with consistency. All of us I think during the day can pray without ceasing. So we pray throughout the day just sometimes just "help Lord" or "guide me" or "give me wisdom." But set aside time in prayer, where you set aside time and there is no distractions. You turn off the phone, the email, you put the pets outside, the children aren't there, and you just have time alone with the Lord; that's been a struggle for

me to do that consistently. I'll tell you that COVID has helped with that because I've been home, and I can have my time with the Lord without looking at my watch. I'm not packing, I'm not traveling, I'm not running around. So that's been a blessing.

And then I've struggled also with concentration. What is it that when we go to pray? I start thinking about what I'm going to fix for supper and what I've got to do for tomorrow. There is so many distractions and thought interruptions. And then I can struggle with contents, just what to pray when I make the time to set aside and pray.

So those three areas, consistency, content, and just concentration. I take them to the Lord, the Lord has helped me with consistency and then he gave me an idea of writing down my prayers to help me with the concentration and the content. I don't write down my prayers every day, but I write down frequently. So the prayers that are in the book that you just held up are not, I didn't write those to publish, those are my prayers. And those were prayers that I wrote down that I was praying. And then I've published them because I thought if I struggle in prayer then I wonder if there are other people who struggle. And God has helped me overcome, maybe he would use my struggle to help other people overcome theirs.

Randy: You've referenced this idea of praying without ceasing and I think that does come into play in our thoughts. If someone comes to mind, you don't know why they came to mind. Maybe you just say a little prayer for them at that moment. Or just different decisions we ask God to guide us and give us wisdom. But yet you seem to differentiate between this sort of, I'll use the word *discipline* just to mean it is something that we make the effort to do. This type of prayer where we enter into something a little bit different. What do you see that's different about this prayer that we do very intentionally?

Anne: Well, the prayer that you described, "without ceasing" can be about anything, everything. Like you said, people's names that come to your mind or something you're facing at the moment. But the set aside time, there are four elements to prayer that I try to

incorporate. Maybe not every single time but, and I don't want to give a formula or think that it is something that you have to be legalistic about. But I want to begin my prayers with worship because when I focus on who God is then that tends to put my problems or whatever I'm facing in a different perspective.

So I began with worship. And to help me with that, of course, I use the Word, I use Psalms, I use different things in scripture, just his attributes.

And then I move into confession. Randy, I think that's the weakest part of our Christian lives and our prayer life. We just don't confess. I can see your sin easier than I can see my sin. My sin is like in the southeast, we have the little no-see-'em gnats. They bite the fire out of you, but you can't see them. And my sins are no-see-em's. I can see the sin in other people's lives and I just have a hard time seeing my own. And so I spend time just asking God to show me the sin in my life that needs to be confessed. In fact, in the back of the book I have an appendix, a list of sins that maybe would help somebody get started on examining their own hearts.

And then I move into thanksgiving because the Bible says when we confess our sins, he will cleanse us of all unrighteousness. And then to thank him for his blessings. Right now so many people are going through hard things. We're afraid, we're locked down, we're lonely; all sorts of things coming at us. Trouble with our business, our family, can't go to church and the rest of it, and so I want to cultivate an attitude of gratitude. Instead of focusing on the problems I want to look for God's blessing. I've asked him to give me eyes to see his blessings. And there are blessings all around. It's amazing.

I want to spend time thanking him for cleansing me of sin but also for the blessings that he pours out every day. And then at that point, after worship, confession, and thanksgiving, then I'm ready to intercede. And intercession can be for ministries. I have to confess my grandchildren come first, and then my children, and ministry staff and people. But then I pray for those that God has put on my heart. It takes time. You can't rush through a prayer like that.

So that's where the set-aside time, for me, it was so hard for me to get up in the mornings. So I get up, even now, in lockdown, I have a triple shot of espresso. My family gave me a little machine that makes espresso coffee and so I do that. I do my stretches. And then I have my time where I'm alert, or at least I try to be alert. At that set-aside time it's like a retreat, in a sense, with the Lord each morning. And there was a time when I had small children, I couldn't do it every day but I'd set aside one day a week. So every Saturday morning when my husband would take my children, then I would have that retreat time with the Lord. So it's important to build that into our lives so we can have a set-aside, intense time of prayer, as well as the prayer that you talked about 24/7.

Sheila: Anne, I found it so helpful, the prayers that you have written out. You're right, a lot of us struggle to know how to pray, what to pray. You have this wonderful quote from Robert Murray M'Cheyne about turning the Bible into prayer. I love that. What do you mean by that?

Anne: What I mean by that I think is the same thing he meant by that, we can take scripture and pray it. And God is a God of his word. He keeps his word. His word is true, trustworthy, so that when he gives a promise or he speaks to us, we can hold him to his word. So I think that prefaced a prayer I prayed for our nation based on Daniel chapter 9. And Daniel chapter 9 he was praying for his nation that had come under judgment. He had been reading the prophet Jeremiah, and Daniel claimed a promise that he came across in Jeremiah. He just prayed it back to the Lord. Not verbatim but he was praying basically that God would keep the promise that he read in Jeremiah.

So for us, as we go through scripture, you can find a promise for your children, or a promise for your health, or a promise for your friends, or whatever it is that's on your heart. And then we pray it back to the Lord.

And one of the ones that now we pray, maybe more than any other for our nation is Second Chronicles 7:13. He says, "When I send a pestilence in the land, when I send a

pestilence," like COVID, "if my people called by my name would humble themselves, pray, seek my face." If we would turn away from the wrong things we're doing, never mind pointing our finger at other people.

But if we would repent of our sin, then he says, "I'll hear your prayer and I'll forgive your sin and I'll heal your land." So Sheila, we take that promise, at least I have, and I've prayed that back to him. I'm absolutely confident that he's heard. And I pray that he would forgive us as a nation. And I pray that he would heal us. If he doesn't heal us in this nation, we're not going to be healed. So I pray that healing would come from heaven.

But that's an idea. And there are other prayers for the family. One of the two prayers that I pray at the end, the editor asked me to fill in with two more prayers. I said, "I can't write a prayer. You have to pray and sort of record what you've prayed." So I prayed and the Lord put two on my heart. One was for the persecuted church that I included, and one was for our future generations, really, my children and grandchildren were on my mind. But I labeled it "for future generations."

So God, and all these prayers are filled with scripture. So I've footnoted the scripture references. You can look them up for yourself. But just taking God's word and praying God's word, we can hold him to his Word. He is a God of his Word. And if your faith is based on his Word, Sheila, then there is a strength to your faith. You can't base your faith on your feelings, what you want, your desires, your whims. Your faith, when it is rooted in God's Word there is a strength and power to it and God honors that.

Sheila: Absolutely.

Randy: There is one thing I want to ask you about. You mentioned the confession. I obviously--if there is great sin in our lives, we're doing something wrong and then we need to confess it, and we need to correct our ways. But you know one of the meanings of the word *sin*, "hamartia" in the Greek is simply to miss the mark.

Do you find that sometimes when you're in this sort of confession mode, it is not like you're feeling condemned for the wrong things you've done but God is going, hey, let me show you how to improve. Why don't you just do this? Why don't you just do it this way? Say it this way next time. Do you ever find that sort of the confession could actually be this really great life-coaching-from-God session?

Anne: It's such a good point, Randy because I always bring God's Word into my prayer time. So I start out reading his word and I use the Daily Light, that I think we've talked about before, just a little volume of scripture, morning and evening. I use that to launch myself into prayer. So that's where very often I get that encouragement, correction, specific instruction.

In confession, when I'm confessing rudeness or shortness of temper with somebody or irritation that showed an impatience, and I've listed some sins in the back just to help people examine their hearts, and I bring it to the Lord and confess it. And then know that it is under his blood, he's cleansed me and then I just move on because we've all missed the mark.

Romans 3:23 says all of us have sinned. We've all missed the mark. But we can't stay in that guilt. Guilt, actually, I think is a friend because guilt is what drives us to confession and confession drives us to the cross. And the cross is where we receive cleansing. So to have the cleansing that comes as a result of our confession and claiming the blood of Jesus, and I don't mean for salvation or forgiveness because that took place when I was a little girl. But I mean coming back to the Lord that I might maintain a sweet fellowship with him.

So the purpose of confession to me is not only to be cleansed because I want to be pure in heart, I want to be right with the Lord, but I don't want there to be anything that hinders me in my personal relationship with him. If you have children, you know when they've disobeyed you or done something bad or wrong and they try to hide it from you, then you get fierce and you discipline and all that. But if they come running to you and say,

"Mommy, I just broke the window." And you put your arms around them and say,
"Thank you for telling me. Let's go fix the window."

So we need to run to our heavenly Father and tell him when we've done something wrong that comes to our mind, he will cleanse us, forgive us, put his arms around us. If something needs to be fixed, he will help us fix it. And then we do learn from that. You're exactly right. So as we come to him, he grows us up in our maturity.

And also, if I confess to him a shortness of temper this week and then tomorrow, I'm short of temper and I've confessed it again on the third day, as we keep doing that, it was like when I had cancer. You bring it to the radiation machine and increasingly every day you're radiated, and it just destroys those cancer cells. And so when we come back to the cross and confess our sin, apply the blood of Jesus, it just weakens that hold of sin in our lives. So pretty soon I can go for a week without being impatient or maybe two weeks and then we overcome, and we live in victory.

Sheila: It's interesting, Anne, when you mentioned that. You have a couple of appendixes at the back of this beautiful book. But the one about identifying sin, I actually, I found myself in there quite a lot and it was surprising. Because so often we think sin is the big stuff, you know. It's like immorality or drunkenness. But the things that you have listed, I have found myself being led to confess. I think that's as much of a gift in this book as anything.

Anne: Sheila, it's so interesting because several years ago, I just was so superficial. I was writing a book on revival and then the key to revival is repentance, and so I was writing about it. The Lord just revealed to me, and it was a list of sins that I came across, and the writer is an old-timey writer who has since gone to glory. But he said to read it through three times. And the first time I read it I thought, well, thank goodness, there is not one of those sins in my life. And then the second time, I read it, I thought, well, if I just really stretch it, I could see two or three of those sins.

The third time I read the list, Sheila, I saw every single sin in the list in my life in one form or another. I got on my face and for seven days I was weeping and repenting. And every time I opened my Bible there would be something else God would show me. It was an Isaiah six experience. He just raked me over the coals. But when he finished, it was like I'd had a bath on the inside. I felt cleansed and fresh and my relationship with him was sweet.

So it was a difficult experience, but it was worth going through. And I personally believe the entire church today, generally speaking, needs this kind of repentance. We need to stop pointing our finger at others and we need to get right with God. That we would be unhindered in our relationship with him that he could flow through us in a powerful way into a nation and a world that's desperate for hope, for answers, for peace. And we have it but sometimes it's so blocked in our lives. We're so hindered from it coming out because of the sin that's there. So we need to get rid of that that the spirit can flow freely through us.

Randy: I think, also, and that is tied to another part of what you talk about in your sort of structured prayer life and that's the idea of worship. But I think also this idea of worship strikes a lot of people as singing or something musical. And if you're not musical or if you don't like to sing in public, you kind of run from that. When you talk about worship, what does that look like?

Anne: Thank you for asking that because I can't sing. The older I get I want to but I can't. But I'll tell you what you can do in your prayer life, you can pull in music, somebody else's music. And there are times when somebody will send me a link to a worship song, and I'll use that in my prayer time.

But the worship that I normally do, most often, is thinking through the attributes of God. So as I begin, and I can link it to whatever it is I'm struggling with. If it is with my health, I worship him as Jehovah Rapha, he is the healer. He took upon himself our infirmities and our diseases, and he understands the feelings of our afflictions. He is a high priest

who ever lives to make intercession for us. And so I just worship him as the son of God, the Son of Man, and humanity. He understands what it feels like to hurt and to be tired and weary and surrounded by confusion and chaos.

So you just begin by putting your focus on who he is. And if you need help with that you read the Psalms. So many of them, David worships him as our refuge and strength. And he is our hiding place, he is our strong tower that we run to that we can be safe. He is our peace, he is our righteousness. So you just go through his attributes so that when you pray then for yourself or for your family, when you've placed your focus on him, he is much bigger than anything you face. It just puts everything else into perspective.

Sheila: There is a wonderful section at the end of the book, and we'll tell you how to get a hold of the book in a minute where and alphabetizes blessings, and I think that's just a wonderful, wonderful thing to be able to read over.

We are, at the moment, at the end of mission feeding for 2020. We want to meet the goals that we have committed to our faithful partners on the ground and you can help us. So please, would you watch this?

On the mission field:

Announcer: The birth of a child is one of the most transcendent moments in time. The miracle of life! Tiny hands and feet. We instinctively see they're created in the image of God. And over time they grow into the young men and women they were designed to be. At least that's every parent's hope and prayer.

Sheila: I don't know if you can see... Darling, I don't want to touch it. I don't want to hurt you. But can you see her skin? Her skin has begun to literally peel off her body.

Announcer: Throughout Africa terrible events like famine and drought have decimated entire communities and left many with little or no food. The devastating effects of severe

food shortages are most visible in the children.

Sheila: With severe malnutrition the first organ to shut down is the skin. It is as if all the reserves go to try and protect what's left inside.

James and Betty, you have sat here over and over and over through the years faithfully serving and feeding millions, but I know you see this. This mom who is desperate, like any mom would be, to save the life of her precious child had to travel 30 kilometers to get here. But it is why mission feeding matters so much. We talk about life where it is needed most. Where it is needed most is in the villages where these darling children live. Because this mom shouldn't have to travel 30 kilometers with a desperately sick little lamb. They need our help, and they need it now.

End of video

In the studio:

Sheila: I know that 2020 has been a year like no other for everyone. We have all struggled in one way or another. But can you imagine being a mom in Africa during this COVID crisis when your child is literally starving to death? I can't even... Having been there, having walked into those malnutrition clinics, having sat there with these precious little ones who almost don't have the energy to cry, it's just...

I remember going back to my hotel, actually, I think we were staying in tents the first time, and literally sobbing into my pillow because I thought Lord, how can this be happening while we as the body of Christ are still on this planet? And it can seem like it is overwhelming. And it is tempting to flip channels and think, I don't want to know about that. Life's hard enough.

But you know, we are God's sons and daughters on the earth at this time. The great news is we can do something about this. This is isn't hopeless. We do it one person at a time. Mission feeding, do you know that for \$30 you can feed three children for three months?

Randy, where could you do that? What could you do with \$30 here?

Randy: Yeah. The shot of you holding that child...or not wanting to touch the child because you don't want to hurt the child, I have been there. I've been in those clinics as well. I don't know what happened with the child we saw there but I have seen them not make it through the day. And that is so, so very difficult. I couldn't do it if I didn't know that there was an answer.

I know that that answer is you. Because as Sheila alluded to, for \$30 we can feed three children for three entire months, for \$50 five children, for \$100, 10 children. Maybe at the end of the year here you're thinking, it's time to make some big gifts. \$1,000 would feed 100 children for three months.

That's the solution. That's where we need to intervene in the malnutrition. Not when they're at the clinic and they're at death's doorstep. We do what we can but that's very, very difficult. We need to go into the villages because I know, Sheila, I know you've seen this, we've gone into these villages and the difference between a village that has mission feeding and one that doesn't have mission feeding is night and day. Frankly, it is life and death.

So here, as we wrap up mission feeding this year, as we wrap up this year, I'm asking you to just take a second and say, Lord, what would you have me do? Because we can do so much together. We can take what may have been a difficult year for a lot of people and make it a year of new beginnings, a year of nutrition, a year of life, a year of us being the gospel in someone's life.

And remember, this is the last week of mission feeding. Will you go online or go to the phones and make the best gift you can? I pray you'll do it right now.

Begin video clip

Announcer: Today on top of the daily fight for life and food, families and children across Africa are now forced to deal with the challenges of a global health crisis. Because of COVID-19 food scarcity has increased drastically and the fear of dying from lack of food is far greater than the virus itself.

Even in these unprecedented times, mission feeding won't stop. With your help, mission feeding will continue to be a daily source of food, encouragement, and health for the 350,000 children counting on us.

Call now with your lifesaving gift of \$30, \$50, or \$100 that will help feed and care for three, five or ten children for three full months. With your gift we'll send you *40 Days of Healing Promises*. This beautiful hardcover devotional will encourage you in your faith as you dive deep into the healing promises that are yours in Jesus' name.

With your gift of \$100 or more please request the "Blessings for your Home" bowls and tea towel set. This set of bowls and two beautifully designed tea towels will make a wonderful addition to your home and serve as a reminder of your help in blessing others as a friend of *LIFE*.

Finally, with your gift of \$1,000 or more to help feed and care for 100 children be sure to request our commemorative bronze sculpture, "A Mother's Strength." This is the last week! Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of video

On the mission field:

James: Betty, you look at this long line and boy, it goes all the way back to the big four-wheel-drive truck. You started praying years ago that God would make the line to feed the children longer than the line to be fed. I think God's answered your prayer.

Betty: He has, James. At the same time, the line gets longer so we need to help our line to reach them, continue to grow and you to reach out more because I know you're blessed as you see these children being fed here. Let's don't let it stop. Let's keep soup in the barrel so they can come and line up and get fed.

End of clip

In the studio

Randy: This is the last week of mission feeding. Of course, it is the end of the year so keep that in mind. I pray you would give just the best gift you can towards mission feeding. And if you would like it, Sheila, we have a wonderful gift to those who support mission feeding.

Sheila: Yeah, Anne's book is wonderful. It is called *The Light of His Presence*: "Prayers to draw you near to the heart of God." We love it. Anne, thank you so much for being with us. It's so great to see you looking so well.

Anne: Thank you, Sheila, so much! It's always a blessing to be with you. Thank you, and Randy also.

Sheila: We will see you next time on *LIFE Today*. Thanks for being with us.

Randy: Bye-bye!